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ABSTRACT

Many school-standards manuals suggest that if educators set clear standards and back those standards with effective teaching, most students will achieve the goals set for them. This report describes the motivations and behaviors of students themselves. Data were derived from a nationwide telephone survey of 1,000 randomly selected public high school students and 250 private-school students, focus-group interviews, and case studies of students in Jefferson County, Kentucky, and San Francisco, California. Public-school adolescents reported shortcomings in their schools more frequently than did private-school students. Most students in both public and private schools reported that curriculum apart from the basics is irrelevant; getting an education is important; more rigorous standards would make them work harder; and the attention of teachers is the key motivation for learning. Private school-students expressed more positive views about their teachers than did public school students; students and teachers in public schools complained of a lack of respect and civility; African-American and Hispanic teens supported higher standards for all students; and private-school students were significantly more positive about their schools and teachers than were students in public schools. Eleven tables are included. (Contains 18 endnotes.) (LMI)

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